

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, July 25, 2014

Notes from Commissioner Gist

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2. RIDE provides [guidance](#) to legislation related to assessments and graduation requirements
3. Rhode Island [recognized](#) for its process for evaluating support professionals.
4. The [Genesis](#) Center chosen as “model program” by Vice President Joe Biden.

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)

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7. New [resources](#) available to support full implementation of the Support Professional Rhode Island Model Evaluation and Support System
8. EPSS [Adjustments](#) for 2014-2015
9. RIDE announces Third Annual *Innovation Powered by Technology* [Conference](#)

Action Item Calendar

September 1: deadline for reports from Interim Program Quality Improvement [grantees](#)

September 30: [UCOA FY 2014](#) data due
August 8: Presentation proposal deadline for Innovation Powered by
Technology [Conference](#)

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Reminder to LEAs to complete survey about class of 2014

The [July 11th field memo](#) contained a brief survey to collect end-of-year information about the graduating class of 2014 as requested by the Board of Education. The survey was due on Monday, July 18th. Thank you to those of you who were able to complete the survey. Your responses will provide useful information to the Board and will help refine the Diploma System and graduation requirements. We will be following up with a call to those of you who have not yet completed the survey and will send a communication to your school committee chair should we be unable to reach you. You may access the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RIDEgraduation> or send questions concerning the survey to <https://support.ride.ri.gov/>.

2. RIDE provides guidance to legislation related to assessments and graduation requirements

I am responding to several inquiries asking for guidance in interpreting Senate Bill 2059, which added § 16-97-8 to the Rhode Island General Laws. The most pertinent operative language is as follows:

Prior to the graduating class of 2017, no state assessment conducted pursuant to this chapter, and no other standardized testing program or assessment, shall be used to determine a student's eligibility to graduate from high school.

Please note that § 16-97-8 in no way deviates from our clearly established policy direction that all students will leave high school fully prepared for

success in college, careers, and life. By eliminating the use of a state assessment as one measure of a student's readiness, the General Assembly has clarified that the determination of student readiness is a local decision.

Section 16-97-8 became law upon passage. It is clear that no state assessment shall be used to determine a student's eligibility to graduate from high school until the class of 2017. Accordingly, every student in the class of 2014 who has met your locally established diploma criteria that determine college and career readiness should receive a diploma, regardless of his or her performance on the state administered NECAP assessment.

If you or your district has any concerns related to the implementation of §16-97-8, please reach out to Sharon Lee at Sharon.Lee@ride.ri.gov or via phone at 401-222-8484. Sharon and her team will be happy to support and assist however you feel is necessary.

3. Rhode Island recognized for its process for evaluating support professionals.

This week the United States Department of Education featured Rhode Island's process for the evaluation of support professionals on its [website](#). The Progress blog features innovative ideas, promising practices, and lessons learned from Race to the Top states. The process for the evaluation of support professionals was piloted in 2013-2014 in a number of districts throughout the state. In this featured story, support professionals from Chariho, Lincoln, and Westerly share their perspectives on how the evaluation process helps document the role support professionals play in advancing student achievement. I am proud of the process we have developed for support professionals and I encourage you to share this featured story widely.

4. The Genesis Center chosen as "model program" by Vice President Joe Biden.

The Genesis Center in Providence was designated as a “model program” by Vice President Biden in his review of federal workforce programs that demonstrate success. The Genesis Center is one of just 30 nonprofit organizations in the country working in adult education to receive this National Skills Coalition recognition. Our community is fortunate to have access to the Genesis Center’s exceptional resources!

From RIDE

Student Supports:

5. Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) Approves Medicaid Reimbursement for Orientation & Mobility Services

RIDE is pleased to announce that the Executive Office of Health & Human Services has approved RIDE’s request to add Orientation & Mobility services for students who are blind and visually impaired as an approved Medicaid reimbursement service effective August 1, 2014. Details explaining the coding, maximum allowance and rates will be sent to the Special Education Administrators in your district Monday, July 28th. RIDE wishes to thank our partners at EOHHS, the RI Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) at the Sherlock Center at Rhode Island College, and the RI Technical Assistance Project for researching and promoting this change.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge:

6. Interim Program Quality Improvement Grants Awarded

Program Quality Improvement grants have been made available to programs through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. Eleven public schools were issued a total of \$146,767 in the first round of Program Quality Improvement (PQI) grants through the RI Department of Education. The interim PQI grants for public schools were designed to provide financial support as one-year technical assistance to help increase the quality of their program. We kindly request the following schools spend their allotted funds and complete all required paperwork (final financial

status report, cover sheet with receipts, and summary report) by September 1.

The schools that received interim PQI grants are:

- Central Falls: Captain G. Harold Hunt Early Learning Center (awarded \$25,805.29)
- Chariho Integrated Preschool (awarded \$9,600.00)
- Cranston Public Schools (awarded \$12,680.00)
- Cumberland Preschool Center (awarded \$4,775.94)
- Warwick: DrumRock Early Childhood Center (awarded \$19,982.70)
- Jamestown Public Schools (awarded \$4,746.93)
- West Warwick: Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School (awarded \$25,198.86)
- Northwest Region Special Education* (awarded \$7,520.00)
- Pawtucket School Department (awarded \$9,156.00)
- South Kingstown Integrated Preschool (awarded \$19,200.00)
- Westerly Inclusionary Early Childhood Program (awarded \$8,371.04)

** Indicates that the school has already closed out and completed all paperwork. Thank you!*

Public schools that wish to access additional Program Quality Improvement grant funds must close-out their current grant and have been issued a BrightStars rating. Programs interested in accessing these grants should contact the Center for Early Learning Professionals by calling 736-9020 or visiting their website at www.center-elp.org.

Educator Evaluations:

7. New resources available to support full implementation of the Support Professional Rhode Island Model Evaluation and Support System

The evaluation team at RIDE has been working with support professionals to develop additional resources for full implementation of the Support Professional Rhode Island Model Evaluation and Support System in 2014-2015. A new online module and SOO samples are now posted on the RIDE website. If you have any questions, please email edeval@ride.ri.gov.

- New Support Professional Online Module:
http://media.ride.ri.gov/PD/Eval/Support_Professionals_output/story_html5.html
- New SOO samples:
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/OnlineModules.aspx>

8. EPSS Adjustments for 2014-2015

As RIDE finalizes the evaluation ratings collection from all LEAs, we are working with your district configuration administrators and data managers to open the system for the 2014-2015 school year. All LEAs should maintain complete evaluator caseloads in the system. Please do not remove educators from caseloads at this time even if you believe individual educators will not be evaluated in 2014-2015. In the coming months, we will be working through the details of how best to make adjustments to EPSS to accommodate educator cycles. Removing educators from caseloads now before we understand the technical details could result in additional work later in the year.

If you have any questions, contact Sandra Forand or Lisa Foehr at Sandra.forand@ride.ri.gov or Lisa.Foehr@ride.ri.gov.

Multiple Pathways:

9. RIDE announces Third Annual Innovation Powered by Technology Conference

Please save the date of October 25 for our third annual statewide Innovation Powered by Technology Conference. Information can be found on the RIDE web site at www.ride.ri.gov/TechConf.

RIDE is seeking presentation [proposals](#) to accelerate the implementation of high quality blended and digital learning by cultivating the quality already created in Rhode Island. Educators, school leaders, policy makers,

technology coordinators are all encouraged to share implementation strategies, best practices, and lessons learned at the conference. Please share this information widely in your district.

Proposals will be accepted until the close of business on August 8. You will receive a confirmation indicating that your proposal has been received. There is a limit to the number of submissions per institution. If more than 3 are submitted, only the first 3 submitted chronologically will be reviewed and considered. Lead presenters will be notified of proposal decisions by August 22.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>.